

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 IGA-02 EB-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19

COME-00 DRC-01 /146 W

----- 019475

R 221155Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6611

INFO USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5216

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, TS, US

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN ELIGIBILITY FOR MAP GRANT ASSISTANCE

REF: A) STATE 177624

B) STATE 180646 (NOTAL)

1. FOLLOWING RECEIPT REF (A) BUT PRIOR RECEIPT REF (B), I MADE APPOINTMENT WITH AHMED BENNOUR, SECSTATE MINDEF, FOR MORNING AUG 21 TO RAISE WITH HIM PROBLEM OF END ITEM UTILIZATION REPORTING. I INTENDED TO LEAVE WITH HIM ADVANCE COPY OF NOTE MENTIONED PARA ONE REF (A). AFTER CAREFUL STUDY REF (B), HOWEVER, I HAVE POSTPONED MEETING PENDING RECEIPT FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS FROM DEPARTMENT.

2. UNTIL RECEIPT REF (B), I HAD UNDERSTOOD FROM DEPT THAT WE WERE TO DISCUSS TWO MATTERS WITH TUNISIANS THAT WERE OF CONCERN IN WASHINGTON, I.E., END ITEM USE REPORTING AND WAIVER OF INTEREST ON AN OLD DEBT. REF (B), HOWEVER, MAKES NO SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO EITHER SUBJECT. ON CONTRARY, AS WE READ IT, DEPT SEEMS TO BE ASKING US TO ASK TUNISIANS TO REAFFIRM THEIR BASIC AGREEMENT TO ENTIRE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. EVEN IF THIS IS NOT DEPT'S INTENTION, CONFIDENTIAL

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I FEEL SURE TUNISIANS WILL SO INTERPRET PROPOSED NOTE, WITH

RESULT THAT OUR APPROACH THEN BECOMES HORSE OF ENTIRELY DIFFERENT COLOR. THEREFORE, BEFORE I SEE BENNOUR, I WISH BE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN OF DEPARTMENT'S INTENTION.

3. THUS, LANGUAGE PROPOSED REF (B) REFERS TO AGREEMENTS OF NOVEMBER 1957, 28 NOVEMBER 1967 AND 30 SEPTEMBER 1968. FIRST OF THESE (1957), APPEARS TO BE BASIC MILITARY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT BETWEEN USG AND GOT. MOREOVER IT REFERS TO SALES. NOWHERE IS TERM GRANT MENTIONED⁹ AGREEMENT OF 1967 ESTABLISHES LIAISON OFFICES AND MAKES GENERAL STATEMENT THAT GOT WILL PROVIDE INFO ON PROGRAMS AND USE OF ASSISTANCE AS REQUIRED BY USG. AGREEMENT OF 1968 COVERS WHAT APPEARS TO BE ONE-TIME GRANT AND MAKES REFERENCE TO 1957 AND 1967 AGREEMENTS. IT ALSO COVERS DISPOSITION REQUIREMENTS OF GRANT AID, AN ITEM THAT WAS ONLY JUST RECENTLY SUBJECT OF A FURTHER NOTE COVERING SALES OF SUCH AID (TUNIS 4113, STATE 094271).

4. AS DEPT IS AWARE, WE HAVE JUST GONE THROUGH DIFFICULT PERIOD WITH TUNISIANS ON SUBJECT OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND WE HAVE BEEN GRATEFUL FOR DEPT'S HELP. MISUNDERSTANDING OVER FY '74 FMS CREDITS WAS FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY BY REQUEST FOR TUNISIAN AGREEMENT ON DISPOSITION BY SALE OF GRANT MATERIEL. BOTH OCCURRED AGAINST BACKDROP OF TUNISIAN CONCERN THAT WE MAY BE REASSESSING VALUE OF OUR FRIENDSHIP WITH THEM AS WE MOVE TO ASSIST OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES WHOSE FRIENDSHIP OVER YEARS HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY LESS CONSTANT. I AM THEREFORE MOST RELUCTANT TO FUEL FURTHER TUNISIAN CONCERN OR GIVE THEM WRONG SIGNAL BY APPEARING TO RAISE WHOLE CONCEPT OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE WHEN IT NOT NECESSARY DO SO. TUNISIANS CANNOT HELP BUT QUESTION OUR MOTIVES IN SO DOING.

5. I CAN SEE NO PROBLEM WITH RAISING SPECIFIC ITEMS OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH END ITEM REPORTING AND MATTER OF DEBT BOTH ORALLY AND BY NOTE. INDEED, I WOULD EXPECT BENNOUR TO BE HELPFUL IN RESOLVING THESE PROBLEMS. I FURTHER AGREE THAT TIME TO RAISE THESE PROBLEMS IS NOW AS SUGGESTED PARA ONE REFTEL (A). BUT I SHALL WANT CONSIDERABLY MORE INFORMATION FROM DEPT BEFORE APPEARING TO RAISE WITH BENNOUR

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MATTER OF VERY BASIS OF OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND EVEN PRESENCE HERE. UNLESS THERE ARE ADDITIONAL LEGAL REQUIREMENTS THAT GOT IS NOT MEETING WHICH ARE NOT APPARENT TO ME FROM REFTELS, I DO NOT BELIEVE AN EFFORT TO SECURE TUNISIAN COMPLIANCE WITH TWO SPECIFIC PROBLEMS BY REFERENCE TO THREE BROAD GAUGE NOTES, NONE OF WHICH EVEN MENTION SUBJECTS AT HAND, WILL SERVE OVERALL GOT-USG RELATIONS. FURTHERMORE TO TAKE SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY

PUT BENNOUR (WHO WE CONSIDER TO BE ON OUR SIDE) IN
DIFFICULT POSITION WITHIN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT. FINALLY,
FACT THAT TUNISIANS BEING ASKED IN WRITING TO REAFFIRM
GENERALITIES THEY ALREADY AGREED TO IN WRITING LONG AGO
MIGHT EASILY BE INTERPRETED BY SENSITIVE PEOPLE AS
INDICATING A LACK OF CONFIDENCE ON OUR PART IN THEIR WORD.

6. MATTER IN BRIEF SEEMS TO HAVE ESCALATED OUT OF ALL
PROPORTION TO REAL SUBJECTS AT ISSUE, WHICH ARE MANAGEABLE.
I WOULD THEREFORE APPRECIATE IT IF DEPT WOULD TAKE ANOTHER
LOOK AND ADVISE. WHAT IS NEEDED HERE IT SEEMS TO ME IS
LANGUAGE THAT CAN BE INCORPORATED INTO A POLITICAL NOTE
IF DESIRED, THAT DEALS DIRECTLY WITH THE PROBLEMS AT
HAND. IF THE DEPARTMENT HAS SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND, I
WOULD APPRECIATE KNOWING WHAT IT IS.
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